

SOUTHEAST ALASKA DRIFT GILLNET FISHERY
MANAGEMENT PLAN, 1992



Regional Information Report No. 1J92-10

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Commercial Fisheries Division
Southeast Region
Juneau, Alaska

May 1992

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
SALMON RETURNS	1
MANAGEMENT APPROACH	2
Weekly Fishing Announcements	3
Weekly Fishing Periods	3
U.S./CANADA PACIFIC SALMON TREATY	3
CHINOOK SALMON CATCH	4
TREE POINT AND PORTLAND CANAL FISHERY	4
Introduction	4
1992 Outlook	4
Management Goals	5
Management Plan	6
PRINCE OF WALES AND STIKINE FISHERIES	7
Introduction	7
1992 Outlook	7
Management Goals	8
Management Plan	8
TAKU/SNETTISHAM GILLNET FISHERY	10
Introduction	10
1992 Outlook	10
Management Goals	10
Management Plan	11
LYNN CANAL FISHERY	13

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont.)

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	13
1992 Outlook	13
Management Goals	14
Management Plan	14
TERMINAL HATCHERY FISHERIES	15
Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association Terminal Area Fisheries	16
Terminal Area - Eastern Passage	16
Terminal Area - Nakat Inlet	17
Crystal Lake Hatchery Chinook and Coho Salmon Terminal Fishery	18
FISHERY CONTACTS	19

INTRODUCTION

This management plan provides an overview of the expected salmon run sizes, management issues, and harvest strategies for the Southeast Alaska drift gillnet fishery for the 1992 season.

There are approximately 480 limited entry permits in the Southeast Alaska drift gillnet fishery of which over 95% are actively fished each year. Drift gillnet landings have averaged approximately 1,900,000 salmon annually since 1960. The drift gillnet fishery harvests an average of 42% of the sockeye, 26% of the chum, 12% of the coho, 5% of the pink and 4% of the chinook salmon in all southeast commercial fisheries combined.

The drift gillnet fishery targets primarily on sockeye, pink, and summer chum salmon early in the season, and on coho and fall chum salmon during the fall season. Chinook salmon are usually harvested incidentally, although some targeted chinook salmon fisheries are allowed in terminal hatchery areas in the spring. Currently, there are no directed gillnet fisheries for natural stock chinook salmon in Southeast Alaska.

There are five drift gillnet fishing areas in Southeast Alaska: District 1 (Tree Point and Portland Canal), District 6 (Prince of Wales), District 8 (Stikine), District 11 (Taku-Snettisham), and District 15 (Lynn Canal). In addition, drift gillnet fisheries occur in several terminal areas adjacent to hatchery facilities. Each of these gillnet fisheries are discussed separately in this management plan.

SALMON RETURNS

In the Southeast Alaska region, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) issues formal preseason return forecasts only for pink salmon. Otherwise, the projected returns of sockeye, chum, and coho salmon presented in this management plan are strictly qualitative and should not be considered official department forecasts. The return projections are calculated primarily from parent-year catch and escapement data and are expressed in terms of probable magnitude of return relative to historic levels.

Average returns of sockeye salmon to the drift gillnet fishing areas are expected in 1992. Although returns of natural summer chum salmon stocks are anticipated to be below average in most areas, overall summer chum salmon returns to southern Southeast should be above average. Average returns of fall chum salmon are expected in the Lynn Canal drift gillnet fishing area. Returns of hatchery-produced summer chum salmon are expected to contribute significantly to the District 1, 11, and 15 gillnet fisheries. Overall, returns of coho salmon should be close to average levels. An average pink salmon return of

56,700,000 has been predicted for all Southeast Alaska in 1992. Subtracting the overall escapement goal of 26,700,000 from the forecasted return results in a total catch forecast of 30,000,000 pink salmon. This total includes 1,200,000 pink salmon (1,000,000 harvest and 200,000 broodstock) from hatchery returns.

MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The lack of accurate preseason forecasts for salmon returns to the various drift gillnet fishing areas requires a flexible management approach. Thus, this management plan presents only a general outlook of how the season is expected to develop. Some specific management approaches presented here may be altered depending on in-season assessments of salmon run strength. Drift gillnet fishermen are encouraged to contact department management staff listed at the end of this plan for more detailed management information.

The primary objectives for management of the 1992 drift gillnet fishery are:

1. Obtain overall salmon spawning escapement goals with the best possible distribution to all systems.
2. Provide for an orderly fishery while harvesting those fish in excess of spawning escapement needs.
3. Promote the harvest and processing of good quality fish within the constraints dictated by run size.
4. Manage the drift gillnet fisheries for a catch quota of 7,600 chinook salmon, exclusive of Alaska hatchery produced fish [5AAC 33.365. (10)(B)].
5. Minimize, to the extent possible, the interception of salmon destined for locations where weak runs are expected.

Achievement of these management objectives will be accomplished by in-season adjustments of fishing time to control harvests in specific areas in accordance with salmon run strength and timing. Comparisons of current year fishing performance to historical fishing success (i.e., catch-per-unit-effort, or CPUE analysis) is a major component of in-season run strength assessment. This approach assumes that commercial catch rates are a true reflection of run strength by time period, and can be relied upon to indicate salmon escapement rates through the fishing area.

Past experience has demonstrated that management of salmon fisheries based only on CPUE analysis can be misleading, especially for mixed-stock fisheries. Therefore, although fishery performance will be

important to in-season management, other run strength indicators will also be utilized when available. For example, information on spawning escapements, stock separation using scale characteristics, test fishing, observed salmon concentrations or schooling in sanctuary areas, catches from other fisheries, and salmon run timing models will also be utilized by managers.

The increasing availability of hatchery-produced salmon is a major factor in the management of the Southeast Alaska drift gillnet fisheries. Where in-season management is based on fishery performance, it may be difficult to gauge natural stock run strength if significant numbers of hatchery fish are present in the catch. Where possible, the hatchery component of the catch will be separated when evaluating fishery performance.

Weekly Fishing Announcements

In-season management of the District 1 drift gillnet fisheries is conducted by the Ketchikan Area staff, Districts 6 and 8 by the Petersburg and Wrangell area staff, District 11 by the Juneau area staff, and District 15 by the Haines area staff. Because fishermen can move freely among all drift gillnet fisheries, weekly fishing announcements for all areas will be coordinated by the Juneau regional office. These will normally be released simultaneously in all area offices by mid-afternoon each Thursday during the fishing season.

Weekly Fishing Periods

Weekly fishing periods for the drift gillnet fisheries can generally be expected to begin on Sunday at 12:01 p.m. Exceptions are the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association's (SSRAA) terminal fisheries in Nakat Inlet and Earl West Cove where a rotational harvest plan for drift gillnet, seine, and troll fisheries will apply, and the Wrangell Narrows and Ohmer Creek terminal hatchery fisheries that will begin on Monday.

U.S./CANADA PACIFIC SALMON TREATY

The U.S./Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) will influence management of the District 1, 6, 8, and 11 drift gillnet fisheries. For the 1992 season, these fisheries will be managed consistent with the provisions of the PST annexes for the transboundary rivers (Taku and Stikine) and the northern boundary area

(northern British Columbia and southern Southeast Alaska). The management provisions specified by the PST will be considered separately under the specific management plan for each respective fishery. Gillnet fishermen are encouraged to contact local department staff for more detailed information concerning Alaska's PST obligations.

CHINOOK SALMON CATCH

Existing regulations [5AAC 33.365. (10)(B)] specify a catch limit of 7,600 chinook salmon (exclusive of Alaska hatchery fish) for the Southeast Alaska drift gillnet fishery. The Alaska Board of Fisheries adopted this regulation to ensure that the various user groups maintain their recent-year share of the total chinook salmon harvest quota specified by the PST.

The need for management measures to comply with the drift gillnet harvest quota for chinook salmon will depend on in-season evaluation of chinook salmon catch rates relative to the 7,600 fish ceiling. The Board of Fisheries has recommended nighttime fishing closures as the primary management measure to restrict the incidental catch of immature, "feeder" chinook salmon. As for past years, early season area closures will be maintained to minimize the incidental harvest of mature, "spawner" chinook salmon returning to the Stikine River in District 8, the Taku River in District 11, and the Chilkat River in District 15.

TREE POINT AND PORTLAND CANAL FISHERY

Introduction

The Tree Point and Portland Canal drift gillnet fishing area consists of Sections 1-A and 1-B. This fishery targets on sockeye and summer chum salmon early in the season, pink salmon during the middle of the season, and coho and fall chum salmon at the end of the season.

1992 Outlook

Sockeye salmon returns to northern British Columbia river systems contribute significantly to the Tree Point drift gillnet fishery. Based on parent-year escapements, overall returns to these systems are expected

to be average. Returns to Hugh Smith Lake, a local Alaska spawning system, are expected to be below average. Based on parent-year spawning levels, chum salmon returns to most natural spawning systems are expected to be above average.

Returns of summer chum, fall chum, and coho salmon to the Nakat Inlet release site of SSRAA should contribute significantly to the 1992 District 1 gillnet fishery. The 1992 projected returns are approximately 68,600 summer chum, 7,500 coho, and 119,700 fall chum salmon. Peak chum salmon catches from these releases are expected to occur between mid-July and mid-August for summer chum, and late August and early September for fall chum salmon.

The Pink Salmon Management Plan (5AAC 33.260) establishes gillnet fishing time in Section 1-B in relation to District 1 purse seine fishing time when both gear types are concurrently harvesting the same pink salmon stocks. Based on regulations passed by the Board of Fisheries in February of 1991, the plan will start on the third Sunday in July (July 19). The fishing time formula specified by regulation is as follows:

1. When the purse seine fishery is open for any portion of one day during a fishing week the drift gillnet fishery must be open for 48 hours during the same fishing week.
2. When the purse seine fishery is open for any portion of two days during a fishing week the drift gillnet fishery must be open for 96 hours during the same fishing week.
3. When the purse seine fishery is open for any portion of three or more days during a fishing week, the drift gillnet fishery must be open for 120 hours during the same fishing week.
4. Conservation concerns for other salmon species may reduce the fishing time specified in the Pink Salmon Management Plan.

Management Goals

The specific management goals for the 1992 District 1 drift gillnet fishery are as follows:

1. Manage the fishery in accordance with the Pink Salmon Management Plan (5 AAC 33.360).
2. Manage the fishery consistent with the provisions of the PST (5 AAC 33.361).

The sockeye salmon fishery will be managed in accordance with the PST which specifies an average annual harvest of 130,000. The catch limit is viewed as a level to be maintained over the long term. An

average seasonal catch of approximately 129,000 sockeye salmon has occurred in the area during the PST period from 1985 through 1991.

Management Plan

The Tree Point gillnet fishery will initially be open in the waters of Section 1-B for a standard four-day fishing week beginning at 12:01 p.m., Sunday, June 21. This is the opening date specified by regulation. The duration of subsequent fishing periods, through mid-July, will be based on the strength of sockeye and summer chum salmon returns and fishing effort levels. Sockeye salmon run strength to Canadian and Alaskan systems will also be considered when setting fishing schedules.

Beginning July 19 the Section 1-B gillnet fishery will be managed according to the Pink Salmon Management Plan. If the pink salmon run develops as forecasted, it is expected that four to five-day weekly fishing periods will be allowed from mid-July through late August or early September. As allowed by regulation, a minimum gillnet mesh size of six inches may be required to protect pink salmon during the fall season.

Beginning in early September, depending on the duration of the pink salmon run, Section 1-B will be managed for the harvest of fall chum and coho salmon. If a below average coho salmon return is apparent, a conservative management approach can be expected during September. As in recent years, gillnet fishermen can expect the season to end no later than September 20. However, the Nakat Inlet terminal special harvest area, as discussed later in this management plan, is scheduled to be open after September 20.

The PST requires that interception of Portland Canal chum salmon be minimized to assure rebuilding of these stocks. In 1992, no fishing in Section 1-A for Portland Canal chum salmon should be expected, unless it is determined that a harvestable surplus exists. Any management decision to fish Portland Canal must assume there is sufficient additional surplus fish to support a Canadian as well as an Alaskan fishery.

As in recent years, the catch of chum salmon returning to the Nakat Inlet release site will not be included in the evaluation of natural stock fishery performance. The contribution of Nakat Inlet chum salmon will be determined by in-season analysis of coded-wire tag data. Enhanced chum salmon have contributed as much as 71% of individual weekly catches and as much as 31% of the total harvest in recent years.

PRINCE OF WALES AND STIKINE FISHERIES

Introduction

The District 6 drift gillnet fishery occurs in the waters of northern Clarence Strait and Sumner Strait, in regulatory Sections 6-A, 6-B and 6-C, and portions of Section 6-D. The Stikine fishery encompasses the waters of District 8 surrounding the terminus of the Stikine River. Due to their close proximity, management of these fisheries is interrelated resulting in some major stocks being subject to harvest by both fisheries. Two distinct management areas exist within each district; the Frederick Sound (Section 8-A) and Wrangell (Section 8-B) portions of District 8 and the Sumner Strait (Section 6-A) and Clarence Strait (Sections 6-B, 6-C, and 6-D) portions of District 6. Terminal hatchery fisheries for harvesting returns to the Crystal Lake (ADF&G) and Earl West Cove (SSRAA) hatchery facilities will be discussed in the "Terminal Hatchery Fisheries" portion of this management plan.

Historical information indicates that Stikine River sockeye salmon stocks represent a major proportion of the fish available in District 8, a small proportion of the fish in Section 6-A, and a very low proportion in Sections 6-B, 6-C and 6-D. Management of these fisheries is based on sockeye salmon abundance early in the season, pink salmon abundance in the middle, and coho salmon abundance at the end of the fishing season.

1992 Outlook

The preseason forecast for the total return of sockeye salmon to the Stikine River is 130,000 fish, which should produce an allowable harvest of approximately 70,000. Sockeye returns to local Alaskan spawning areas have been average in recent years, but it is difficult to anticipate their production for 1992.

Average pink salmon returns are forecasted for District 6 spawning streams. Because returns are harvested in mixed stock fisheries prior to entering District 6, it is difficult to anticipate local availability. However, pink salmon returns to southern Southeast Alaska are forecast to be above average in 1992. Because the District 6 gillnet fishery occurs in a major migration corridor, pink salmon destined for other districts will be available at certain times. The return of natural coho salmon stocks is expected to be about average. Chinook, coho, and chum salmon returns to enhancement facilities are also expected to contribute significantly to these fisheries. The projected returns to the Eastern Passage SHA are 23,500 coho, 61,100 summer chum, and 14,100 chinook salmon.

Management Goals

The specific management goals for the 1992 District 6 and 8 gillnet fisheries are as follows:

1. Minimize the interception of mature spawning chinook salmon returning to the Stikine River.
2. Obtain pink salmon spawning escapement goals in District 6 and 7 streams.
3. Continue to rebuild spawning escapements of sockeye salmon in local Alaskan systems.
4. Manage the District 6 and 8 gillnet fisheries consistent with the provisions of the PST (5AAC 33.361).

Management Plan

The sockeye salmon fishery in both districts will be managed in accordance with the Transboundary Rivers (TBR) Annex of the PST. The TBR Annex generally allows the District 6 fishery to be managed for harvesting local Alaskan sockeye salmon stocks and is not influenced under most conditions by the presence of stocks of Stikine River origin. Management of the District 8 fishery will be based on the need to harvest sockeye salmon of Stikine River origin as allowed by the sharing provisions of the TBR annex and the conservation of the resource. The 1992 Stikine River sockeye returns should be strong enough to fulfill PST obligations and allow drift gillnetting in District 6 and in District 8.

The general summer sockeye salmon fishing season in both districts can be expected to open on Sunday, June 21 for two days (48 hours). Prior to this date, a terminal chinook salmon fishery will take place outside Ohmer Creek and in Wrangell Narrows, as discussed in the terminal hatchery fishery portion of this management plan. After the initial open period, fishing will depend on assessments of the abundance of sockeye salmon stocks in relation to spawning escapement needs and terms of the PST.

Management actions during the sockeye salmon fishing season will be based on analysis of test fishing, CPUE, and stock identification data to determine the availability of Stikine River fish. These stock abundance indicators, along with fishery performance and stock composition data obtained from Canadian commercial, test, and subsistence fisheries, will be incorporated into a Stikine River sockeye salmon management model. This management model will, as the season progresses, be the primary management tool used to estimate the availability of sockeye salmon for harvest by the Alaskan fishery in District 8 and the Canadian in-river fisheries. Any conservation measures required for Stikine River sockeye salmon will first be implemented in District 8, followed by Sumner Strait in District 6. If the return of sockeye

salmon to local Alaskan island systems is determined to be weak, area and time restrictions will be necessary in District 6.

The area adjacent to the Stikine River mouth and other milling areas for Stikine River chinook salmon in District 8, will be closed during the early portions of the sockeye salmon season to reduce the incidental harvest of Stikine River chinook salmon. These area restrictions will be maintained during any sockeye salmon directed fishing periods through early July. Portions of District 8 may be opened if the sockeye salmon returns are good and an area can be located that has a low incidence of wild chinook and a high number of hatchery chinook.

Pink salmon should begin entering District 6 in significant numbers by the third or fourth week of July. Early-season pink salmon restrictions (i.e., large mesh gillnets) are not anticipated. The early portion of the pink salmon fishery will be managed primarily on CPUE comparisons. By mid-August, pink salmon destined for local systems will begin to enter the fishery in greater numbers and at that time, management will be based on observed local escapements. If the run strength of the local returns are not evenly dispersed within the district or are weaker than anticipated, area restrictions may be necessary.

The coho salmon season will occur during late August and early September. Limited directed fishing in terminal areas for coho salmon is anticipated in District 8. Management of the District 6 coho salmon fishery will be based predominantly on wild stock CPUE analysis. The State-operated Crystal Lake Hatchery and the SSRAA Earl West Cove facility returns are expected to contribute coho salmon to the District 6 and 8 fisheries. In-season estimates from coded-wire tag recovery data will be used to identify the hatchery component of the catch. Only the catch of natural coho salmon will be used for fishery performance evaluation.

Regulations allow gillnetting along the Screen Island shore of Section 6-D during the early and late portions of the season. Specifically, this area encompasses those waters of Section 6-D west of a line from Mariposa Rock Buoy to the northernmost tip of Point Harrington to a point on the shore of Etolin Island at 56°09'35" N. latitude, 132°42'42" W. longitude to the southernmost tip of Point Stanhope. The time periods when fishing may be allowed are: 1) from the third Sunday in June (June 21) through the last Saturday in July (July 25), and 2) from the second Sunday in September (September 13) until the season is closed. During this time, gillnetting is allowed during the same time periods that the adjoining waters of Section 6-C are open.

TAKU/SNETTISHAM GILLNET FISHERY

Introduction

The Taku/Snettisham (District 11) gillnet area encompasses Section 11-B (Taku Inlet, Port Snettisham, and Stephens Passage south to Midway Island) and Section 11-C (Midway Island south to a line from Point League to Point Hugh). This fishery has traditionally targeted on sockeye salmon during the early portion of the season and fall chum and coho salmon during the later part of the season.

1992 Outlook

The harvest of natural stock salmon is anticipated to be below average for the Taku/Snettisham gillnet fishery in 1992. Returns of sockeye and fall chum salmon are expected to be below average, pink and coho salmon returns average, and summer chum salmon wild stock returns extremely poor. However, hatchery contributions from the Snettisham (ADF&G) and Douglas Island Pink and Chum (DIPAC) hatcheries, should contribute significantly to the District 11 drift gillnet harvest. Additional fishing time can be expected this season to harvest Snettisham hatchery chum salmon returning to Limestone Inlet. Chum salmon returning to DIPAC facilities will be harvested incidentally during the directed sockeye salmon fishery. No additional fishing time will be provided to harvest DIPAC hatchery-produced chum salmon.

Management Goals

The following are specific management goals for the 1992 Taku/Snettisham drift gillnet fishery:

1. Provide for sufficient salmon spawning escapements to the Taku River and Port Snettisham and Stephens Passage streams while harvesting those fish in excess of escapement needs.
2. Minimize, to the extent practical, the incidental harvest of chinook salmon.
3. Manage the fishery consistent with the provisions of the PST (5AAC 33.361).

4. Maximize the harvest of hatchery-produced chum salmon returning to Limestone Inlet while minimizing the incidental harvest of Port Snettisham wild sockeye salmon.

Management Plan

Section 11-B will initially open for a 72-hour period on the third Sunday of June (June 21) to harvest sockeye salmon. The strength of the sockeye salmon return will be evaluated from fishery CPUE data and from weekly escapement estimates derived from the ADF&G Taku River fish wheel tagging and recovery project at Canyon Island. Subsequent weekly fishing periods will be based on in-season evaluation of run strength.

As specified in the PST, the Canadian in-river gillnet fishery is allocated 18% of the total allowable catch (TAC) of sockeye salmon originating from the Canadian portion of the Taku River. In addition, the Canadian fishery is allowed to harvest a maximum of 3,000 coho salmon. Other species are allocated to Canadian fishermen only as incidental landings taken during the directed sockeye salmon and coho fisheries. Analysis of CPUE, fishwheel tag recovery, and scale pattern data will be used to manage the District 11 gillnet fishery consistent with the PST.

To minimize the harvest of mature wild stock chinook salmon, Taku Inlet will be closed north of the latitude of Jaw Point during the first week of the fishery. If landings of mature chinook salmon are above the recent-year average, additional time or area restrictions may be implemented during subsequent openings.

Chinook salmon returning to the Snettisham hatchery will not be needed for broodstock in 1992. Therefore, Speel Arm will be opened for harvesting surplus hatchery chinook salmon during the first three weeks of the Section 11-B gillnet fishery. Following the normal weekly closure of the gillnet fishery, Speel Arm will be opened for an additional two-day (48 hours) period. This area will not be restricted by the six-inch maximum mesh size regulation [5AAC 33.331. (d)(2)(B)].

In recent years, large incidental catches of immature chinook during the early portion of the summer fishery have resulted in nighttime fishing closures. The harvest of small, immature chinook salmon was particularly a problem during the first week of the 1991 season when the chinook catch was twice the previous ten-year average. Harvests and CPUE of chinook in the Juneau recreational fishery prior to the opening of the gillnet fishery, and catches during initial gillnet openings, will be evaluated to determine the need for night closures during the 1992 season.

Conservation of Port Snettisham sockeye salmon returns will again be necessary in 1992 to rebuild escapements of these stocks to historic levels. Port Snettisham will be closed inside a line from Point

Amner to Point Styleman through approximately August 15. This restriction does not apply to the openings in Speel Arm in June and early July for harvesting Snettisham hatchery chinook salmon.

Chum salmon returning to DIPAC's hatchery in Gastineau Channel, and Port Snettisham hatchery's remote release site at Limestone Inlet are expected to contribute a significant portion of the District 11 drift gillnet harvest of summer chum salmon. The common property harvest of the DIPAC summer chum salmon return will be limited to incidental catches during the conduct of the targeted sockeye fishery. The Snettisham Hatchery expects approximately 100,000 chum salmon to return to the Limestone Inlet remote release site. There will be no hatchery broodstock taken from this site and all of the return, minus some limited escapement into Limestone Creek, will be available for commercial harvest.

In order to optimally harvest Snettisham Hatchery chum salmon returns to Limestone Inlet and to protect depressed Port Snettisham sockeye salmon returns, the department will initiate a 6-inch minimum mesh size restriction in portions of section 11-B from June 28 until approximately July 25 in Stephens Passage south of Circle Point. Fishing time will be based on the abundance of chum salmon and the magnitude of incidental catches of sockeye salmon.

Directed gillnet management for harvesting Taku River and upper Stephens Passage pink salmon stocks is not anticipated in Section 11-B. Pink salmon will be harvested incidentally to the sockeye and chum salmon fishery, north and south of Circle Point, respectively. Fishing time for pink salmon in Section 11-C will depend on the strength of returns to streams in lower Stephens Passage, Seymour Canal, and the northern portions of District 10. Based on the low preseason forecast and poor 1990 parent-year pink salmon escapement in Section 11-C and Seymour Canal, directed pink salmon openings are not expected in Section 11-C.

Beginning in mid-August, management of the Taku/Snettisham gillnet fishery will be based on the run strength of fall chum and coho salmon. In-season management will be based on evaluation of the fishery catch, effort, and CPUE relative to historical levels and on escapement estimates from the Taku River fish wheel project.

In order to avoid gear conflicts, the District 11 drift gillnet fishery will not be open concurrent with the Juneau Golden North Salmon Derby. Consequently, during statistical week 33, the District 11 gillnet fishery will not open until Monday, August 10.

LYNN CANAL FISHERY

Introduction

The Lynn Canal drift gillnet fishery includes Section 15-A in upper Lynn Canal, Section 15-C in Lower Lynn Canal, and Section 15-B, Berners Bay. Sockeye salmon are the target species during the summer season; chum and coho salmon dominate the catch from late August through the end of the season.

1992 Outlook

Sockeye salmon returns to Chilkoot Lake should be above average in 1992. The 1987 parent-year return to Chilkoot Lake produced a harvest of 327,000 sockeye, the largest harvest on record. The resulting escapement through the Chilkoot Weir of 95,000 sockeye was the third highest in the last ten years. In contrast, the 1987 Chilkat Lake escapement of 49,000 fish (age-5) was the third lowest in the last ten years. The age-6 component (normally 38% of the run) will return from a 1986 parent-year escapement of 24,000, the lowest on record. As a result a below average return of Chilkat Lake sockeye salmon is anticipated during 1992, particularly during the early portion of the season.

The chum salmon harvest in Lynn Canal during the 1988 parent year was approximately 377,000 fish, the fifth highest harvest on record. In addition, parent-year chum salmon escapements were above average in the Klehini River and tributaries. However, heavy floods occurred during the first week in October and severe scouring was observed in some spawning areas. Mainstem Chilkat River chum salmon index counts were also below desired levels. The dramatic decline in run strength observed in recent years suggests that a conservative management approach should be taken for the 1992 season.

During the 1988 parent year, 81,000 coho salmon were harvested in District 15; this was the fourth highest catch in the last ten years. Although escapement levels of coho salmon in lower Lynn Canal were poor; (a peak count of just 2,700 spawners was recorded in the Berners River system), major index systems in upper Lynn Canal, including Chilkoot Lake, Chilkat Lake, and the Tahini River were all near average or above. As a result, overall, returns of coho salmon to upper Lynn Canal are expected to be above average in 1992.

Management Goals

Specific management goals for the 1992 Lynn Canal drift gillnet fishery are as follows:

1. Obtain an escapement of between 53,000 and 92,000 sockeye salmon at the Chilkoot Weir. The escapement objective for the early stock is approximately 22,000 fish prior to week 29 (about July 12), and 40,000 fish for the late stock.
2. Obtain an escapement of between 52,000 and 106,000 sockeye salmon through the Chilkat Weir. The escapement objective for the early stock is approximately 18,000 fish through week 33 (about August 15), and 48,000 for the late stock.
3. Provide for sufficient chum and coho salmon spawning escapements to the Chilkat, Chilkoot, and Berners Rivers and other Lynn Canal systems, while harvesting those fish in excess of escapement needs.
4. Minimize, to the extent practical, the incidental harvest of chinook salmon.

Management Plan

The 1992 Lynn Canal gillnet fishery will open on Sunday, June 21, for a 48-hour fishing period. The open area will include portions of both Sections 15-A and 15-C. During the initial fishing period, the waters of Section 15-A will only be open south of the northern tip of Sullivan Island to provide additional protection for mature chinook salmon returning to the Chilkat River. Area closures to protect mature chinook will continue through July 15. Chilkat Inlet and Chilkoot Inlet south of the latitude of Mud Bay Point will remain closed until Chilkat River sockeye salmon strength can be determined.

After the initial opening, gillnet fishing time and area adjustments will be based on stock-specific catch and escapement information obtained from CPUE analysis, stock composition from scale sampling, weir counts, and test fishing. Total-run forecast models for each specific sockeye salmon stock will be utilized to assess run strength on a weekly basis and help gauge the exploitation rate required to achieve escapement objectives.

As a general guideline, targeted fishing effort on Chilkoot and Chilkat Lake sockeye salmon will not be conducted in Section 15-C unless adequate run strength is demonstrated for both stocks. Section 15-B will remain closed during the initial weeks of the season until Berners Bay salmon stock strength can be better assessed. Portions of Section 15-C will be opened on an experimental basis, similar to the 1991

season, to evaluate the availability of hatchery-produced summer chum salmon while harvesting early wild stock chum. Approximately 50,000 hatchery-produced chum salmon are expected to return to the Boat Harbor remote release site in 1992 and special openings along the western shoreline of Section 15-C, including extended fishing time, are planned to optimize the harvest of these fish. During July, additional portions of Section 15-C may be opened to target wild stock summer chum and pink salmon stocks returning to local streams. Following the period of peak availability of summer chum and pink salmon stocks, the fishery will return to sockeye salmon management and migratory approaches to Berners Bay may be closed.

Fall season management will begin in late August or early September, depending on the availability of sockeye and chum salmon. A conservative management approach will be followed during the early weeks of the fall season until chum salmon run strength can be adequately assessed. Chilkat Inlet will initially be closed, and a 6-1/4 inch minimum gillnet mesh restriction may be employed during the fall season to allow fishing for chum salmon if sockeye salmon escapements are below desired levels. Management of Section 15-C during the fall season will be based on chum and coho salmon run strength and fishing effort levels. If it becomes necessary to provide protection for Berners River coho salmon, gillnetting will be restricted in Section 15-C. Closures in the immediate vicinity of Berners Bay will be considered as the initial conservation measure.

In order to avoid gear conflicts, the District 15 drift gillnet fishery will not be open concurrent with the Juneau Golden North Salmon Derby. Consequently, during statistical week 33, the District 15 gillnet fishery will not open until Monday, August 10.

TERMINAL HATCHERY FISHERIES

For the 1992 season, drift gillnet terminal area fisheries can be expected in Nakat Inlet and Earl West Cove (Eastern Passage) to harvest salmon returning to SSRAA enhancement facilities and in portions of Blind Slough to harvest salmon returning to the Crystal Lake Hatchery (ADF&G). No common property drift gillnet fisheries are expected at the Neets Bay or Carroll Inlet (SSRAA) terminal areas during 1992. At the 1991 meeting of the Board of Fisheries, the board adopted a Deep Inlet terminal harvest management plan; however, the expected returns will be needed for cost recovery and a common property fishery is not likely for 1992.

Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association Terminal Area Fisheries

The terminal hatchery fisheries at Earl West Cove (Eastern Passage) and Nakat Inlet will be managed jointly with SSRAA and according to Board of Fisheries management plans. The open areas and tentative open gillnet fishing times are as follows:

Terminal Area - Eastern Passage

The waters of Eastern Passage south of 56°24'50" N. latitude and west of 132°06'21" W. longitude, with all waters of Madan Bay east of a line from the latitude of the channel marker in the narrows to the eastern tip of Channel Island (56°21'48" N. latitude, 132°09'24" W. longitude) to the navigational light on the northern tip of Channel Island to the southernmost tip of Point Madan (56°22'39" N. latitude, 132°09'42" W. longitude) are tentatively scheduled to be open from 12:00 noon to 12:00 noon on the following dates:

Friday, June 19	-	Saturday, June 20
Wednesday, June 24	-	Thursday, June 25
Sunday, June 28	-	Monday, June 29
Wednesday, July 1	-	Thursday, July 2
Saturday, July 4	-	Sunday, July 5
Tuesday, July 8	-	Wednesday, July 8
Friday, July 10	-	Saturday, July 11
Monday, July 13	-	Tuesday, July 14
Thursday, July 16	-	Friday, July 17
Sunday, July 19	-	Monday, July 20
Wednesday, July 22	-	Thursday, July 23
Saturday, July 25	-	Sunday, July 26
Tuesday, July 28	-	Wednesday, July 29
Friday, July 31	-	Saturday, August 1
Monday, August 3	-	Tuesday, August 4
Thursday, August 6	-	Friday, August 7
Sunday, August 9	-	Monday, August 10
Wednesday, August 12	-	Thursday, August 13
Saturday, August 15	-	Sunday, August 16
Tuesday, August 18	-	Wednesday, August 19
Friday, August 21	-	Saturday, August 22
Monday, August 24	-	Tuesday, August 25
Thursday, August 27	-	Friday, August 28

Sunday, August 30	-	Monday, August 31
Friday, September 4	-	Saturday, September 5
Wednesday, September 9	-	Thursday, September 10
Monday, September 14	-	Tuesday, September 15
Saturday, September 19	-	Sunday, September 20
Thursday, September 24	-	Friday, September 25
Wednesday, September 29	-	Thursday, September 30
Sunday, October 4	-	Monday, October 5

Terminal Area - Nakat Inlet

The waters of Nakat Inlet between 54°50' N. latitude and 54°56' N. latitude are tentatively scheduled to be open from 12:00 noon to 12:00 noon on the following dates:

Thursday, July 16	-	Friday, July 17
Tuesday, July 21	-	Wednesday, July 22
Sunday, July 26	-	Monday, July 27
Friday, July 31	-	Saturday, August 1
Wednesday, August 5	-	Thursday, August 6
Monday, August 10	-	Tuesday, August 11
Saturday, August 15	-	Sunday, August 16
Thursday, August 20	-	Friday, August 21
Tuesday, August 25	-	Wednesday, August 26
Sunday, August 30	-	Monday, August 31
Friday, September 4	-	Saturday, September 5
Wednesday, September 9	-	Thursday, September 10
Monday, September 14	-	Tuesday, September 15
Saturday, September 19	-	Sunday, September 20
Thursday, September 24	-	Friday, September 25
Tuesday, September 29	-	Wednesday, September 30
Sunday, October 4	-	Monday, October 5

Gillnet fishermen are cautioned that these fishing schedules are tentative and subject to change depending on in-season assessments of run strength. Fishermen should check with ADF&G or SSRAA prior to fishing in any of the areas to obtain updated fishery information. Fishermen are requested to ensure the fish caught in the terminal fisheries are reported correctly on fish tickets. This will enable the accurate documentation of fish taken from the special areas and allow area specific sampling of the catch for coded micro-wire tagged fish.

Crystal Lake Hatchery Chinook and Coho Salmon Terminal Fishery

There are two terminal fishing areas for harvesting chinook salmon returns to the state-operated Crystal Lake Hatchery. One is at the mouth of Crystal Creek in the Wrangell Narrows portion of District 6 and the other is at the mouth of Ohmer Creek in District 8.

Crystal Lake hatchery-reared chinook salmon will return to both terminal areas in 1992. The return to the District 8 terminal area is expected to be approximately 1,150 adults. None of these fish will be taken for brood stock and all will be available for harvest. Approximately 9,000 chinook salmon are expected to return to the Wrangell Narrows terminal area, with approximately 6,000 of these fish being surplus to the hatchery brood stock needs. A limited gillnet fishery will be conducted in Wrangell Narrows to harvest a portion of the surplus Crystal Lake chinook. The fishery will open on Monday, June 1 with a one-day open period. Subsequent one day openings are expected to occur on each Monday through June 24. However, open fishing periods will depend upon the egg take needs of the hatchery and the availability of surplus chinook. To minimize conflicts between fishing vessels and other vessels traveling Wrangell Narrows, fishing will be limited to the daylight hours and the length of gillnet gear will be limited to 75 fathoms.

The Ohmer Creek portion of District 8 will open on Monday, June 1, with a two-day open period. Subsequent open periods prior to the general gillnet season will be for two days each week starting on Mondays. Open periods after the start of the general season will be based on the fishing time allowed in the directed sockeye salmon fishery and the availability of surplus chinook salmon. The length of gillnets will be limited to 150 fathoms.

The coho salmon return to the Crystal Lake hatchery is expected to produce 2,000 fish available for terminal area commercial harvest in Wrangell Narrows. A limited number of one-day open periods to harvest these returns can be expected in Wrangell Narrows beginning in mid- to late-August. As stated above, fishing time will be limited to daylight hours; gillnet gear will be limited to 75 fathoms in length.

FISHERY CONTACTS

Following are Commercial Fisheries contacts regarding this management plan:

Scott Marshall
Region 1 Supervisor
P.O. Box 240020
Douglas, AK 99824
(907) 465-4250

Doug Mecum
Region 1 Management Coordinator
P.O. Box 240020
Douglas, AK 99824
(907) 465-4250

Don Ingledue
Area Management Biologist
P.O. Box 240020
Douglas, AK 99824
(907) 465-4250

Joe Muir
Assistant Area Management Biologist
P.O. Box 240020
Douglas, AK 99824
(907) 465-4250

Phil Doherty
Area Management Biologist
2030 Sea Level Drive, Suite 205
Sitka, AK 99901
(907) 225-5195

William Bergmann
Area Management Biologist
P.O. Box 667
Petersburg, AK 99833
(907) 772-3801

Bob DeJong
Area Management Biologist
304 Lake Street, Room 103
Sitka, AK 99835
(907) 747-6688

Randy Timothy
Assistant Area Management Biologist
P.O. Box 200
Wrangell, AK 99929
(907) 874-3822

Ray Staska
Area Management Biologist
P.O. Box 431
Haines, AK 99827
(907) 766-2830

The following is a list of telephone numbers that may be called during the gillnet fishing season to obtain recorded announcements concerning areas open to gillnet fishing:

Ketchikan	-	(907) 225-6870
Petersburg	-	(907) 772-3700
Sitka	-	(907) 747-5022
Juneau	-	(907) 586-3505

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) administers all programs and activities free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability. The department administers all programs and activities in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility please write:

ADF&G ADA Coordinator, P.O. Box 115526, Juneau AK 99811-5526

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 300 Webb, Arlington VA 22203

Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington DC 20240

The department's ADA Coordinator can be reached via phone at the following numbers:

(VOICE) 907-465-6077, (Statewide Telecommunication Device for the Deaf) 1-800-478-3648, (Juneau TDD) 907-465-3646, or (FAX) 907-465-6078

For information on alternative formats and questions on this publication, please contact:

ADF&G, Division of Commercial Fisheries, P.O. Box 115526, Juneau AK 99811-5526 (907)465-4210.